

Common Murre

Birds of a Feather Nest Together

Packed. How do up to 10,000 murres raise chicks on top of Pillar Rock? A female lays one pear-shaped egg that will spin, but not roll off a cliff. Parents take turns incubating their egg they recognize by unique markings and color. At three weeks old, their chick leaps off the edge. Thousands of “jumplings” will flutter down to their waiting fathers who care for them at sea until they learn to fly and dive for fish.

As a murre egg passes through a female's oviduct (tube), it squeezes by glands that secrete pigments that make the unique squiggles and blotches.



Murres crowd together (left). A parent looks after a chick. Like penguins, murres are black and white, stand upright, and swim after fish underwater. Real penguins live in the southern hemisphere and can't fly.



Eagle Puzzler

Bald Eagles once faced extinction. Today, they soar again along the Oregon coast. Here's the dilemma. When an eagle glides over a murre colony, the adults panic and fly. One eagle might snatch one murre, but gulls, ravens and pelicans eat many unguarded chicks and eggs. In a bad year, no chicks survive. However, murres live to age 20 and likely will adjust to life with eagles.

Danger From Above

Nesting seabirds flee from overhead drones, kites and other aircraft, too. If you operate any of these, please fly them far from island colonies. Flying drones over the refuge islands is illegal.



Federal laws protect seabirds and marine mammals from disturbance. All islands, sea stacks and rocks of Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge are closed to public use. Help wildlife by reporting climbing violations to Oregon State Police 800.452.7888.

This panel was paid for by the following agencies and tribes using restoration funds from the 1999 New Carissa oil spill.

